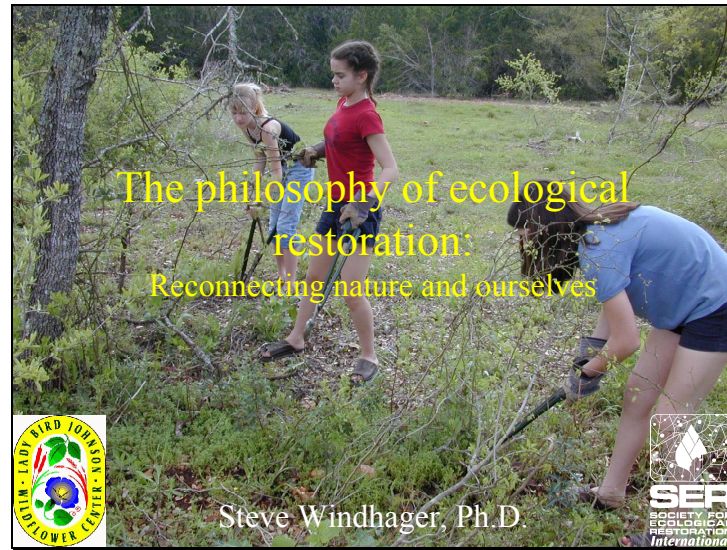


Slide 1



Steve's Background



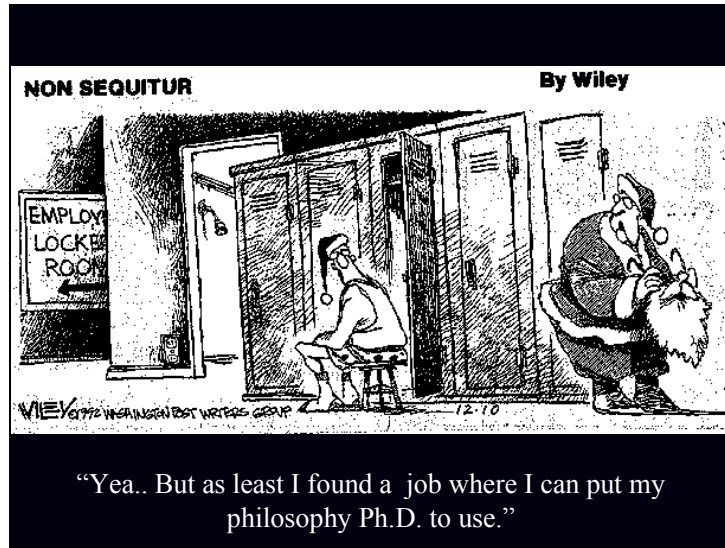
I actually have a B.A. and a Masters in philosophy, with my masters thesis focusing on the philosophical implications of environmental restoration. When I was examining the subject I found that restoration offered something that other environmental activities could not -- the opportunity to positively interact with the rest of nature. I was so excited by the potential of restoration that I decided that I not only wanted to talk about restoration, I actually wanted to do it, so I shifted gears and got a Ph.D. in environmental science, focusing in restoration ecology.

Slide 3



Of course there were other reasons that I decided to move from philosophy to ecology

Slide 4



Slide 5



Sometimes it seems that the more that we hear or learn about the environment, the worse things seem. Also Leopold pointed out that having an ecological understanding means “living in a world of wounds”. None the less, I am optimistic about the future.

The optimism of restoration

- *Not* based in being able to fix what we break
- *Not* based on things getting better with the status quo
- *It is* based in a reciprocal relationship
 - Obviously this is far from the norm, but possible



Philadelphus ernestii (canyon mock-orange)

This optimism is not based on the false belief that we can fix anything that we break--we cannot. Nor is it based on the belief that if we just keep working the way that we are, things will get better--they will not. My optimism is instead based on a belief that the way that we currently interact with the world is not our only option. My optimism is based in restoration's lesson: that we are a part of nature and that there are ways of interacting with the rest of nature that will benefit all parties involved. I believe that if we use restoration as a model of a healthy reciprocal relationship with the rest of nature, we can have our healthy ecosystems, and many of our creature comforts as well.

Slide 7



How come you never see people in those sierra club calendars?

This is hardly a reciprocal relationship with nature. It does not allow for any positive exchange between humans and the rest of nature, instead emphasizing only the negative aspects. There are some definite historical reasons for why Americans have this rather peculiar relationship to nature.

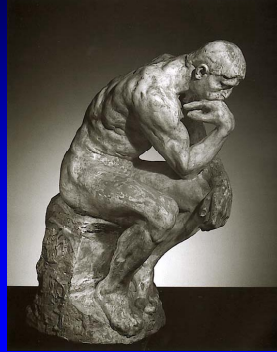
Slide 8



Obviously, when I started doing restoration, that assumption of taking only photos was called into question. I had a difficult time harmonizing environmentalism with restoration. So I went about trying to find out why I had the feelings the way that I do.

The Human/Nature Dichotomy

- Socrates
- Early Immigrants
- John Locke
- Industrialism
- John Muir

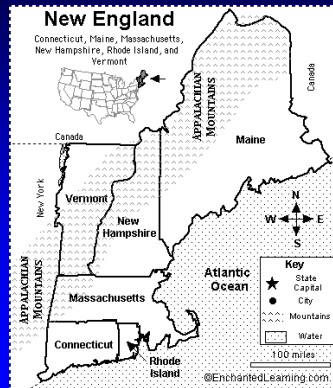


While a discussion of the rift that exists between our culture and the rest of nature could begin with Socrates and his early version of dualism, I believe the American version of the distinction between humans and the rest of nature began with much more recent events, most notably, European colonization.

Early Immigrants

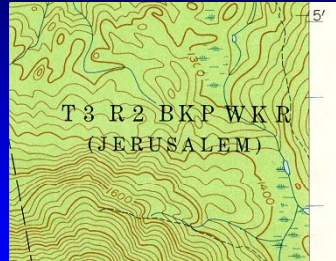
Many set out to recreate the landscape that they had left behind

- New York
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New England



Although there were undoubtedly many reasons the early colonists decided to immigrate to the “New World,” disliking the historical European landscape was probably not chief among them. Quite the opposite, based on the towns and colonies the colonists established (New York, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Amsterdam, and the region New England, etc.), settlers worked to replicate much of what they had left behind. The early colonists replicated a European landscape of neat woodlots and straight fencerows, creating a visually apparent difference between the settled and the wild or dangerous landscape.

Early Immigrants



- Others set out to restore God's order on the landscape
- Invested the landscape with moral connotations
 - New Hope
 - New Haven
 - New Lebanon
 - New Jerusalem
 - New Eden

Beyond the aesthetic reaction that nearly all early colonists would have had to the “dividing line” between what is civilized and what is not, some of the early colonists also invested this distinction with moral connotations. These colonists braved the Atlantic Ocean for religious reasons, creating cities such as New Hope, New Haven, New Lebanon, New Jerusalem, and New Eden. While all of the colonists that arrived set about transforming the land that they encountered into one that better fit their needs and expectations, many of the more religious of them set about it with a moral zeal. For these groups, the native landscape was the dwelling place of savages, witches, and the devil. Only by restoring “God’s order” upon the landscape could evil be overcome or even kept at bay. Along this same vein, those that did not endeavor to transform this new land would have been seen, at best, as slovenly, and at worst, as impious. You can clearly see how the early colonists might feel separate and distinct from their local environment.

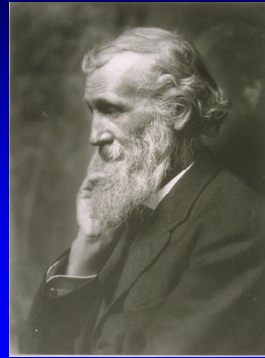
John Locke & Early Industrialism

- Land by itself was without value
- By mixing labor with the land, the land gained value
- Property was, in effect, for the taking if not actively being used
- Prepared the way for manifest destiny
- All human changes to the landscape seen as desirable and good

In the late 17th century, John Locke suggested that ownership of property was based upon mixing one's labor with the land. The land, on its own, was without value, but by mixing labor with it (to clear the land, plant crops, build a home) it became valuable. What we sold, therefore, was our labor, not the land itself. While this did not go over very well with the landed gentry of England (who were typically not mixing a tremendous amount of their *own* labor with the land) it clearly resonated with the colonial Americans. In addition to reinforcing the idea that land should not be left idle, it also justified the early industrialism that was beginning to take hold in America. Under this scenario, the land was valueless except in what we could take from it. Because the land had no value to begin with, any changes were for the better. By this point, a clear dichotomy could be seen in the American psyche that drew a crisp distinction between humans and the rest of nature.

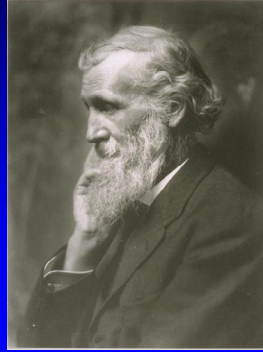
John Muir

- Muir flipped the dichotomy
- Human activities in the landscape seen as necessarily destructive and undesirable
- A new type of original sin
- Sightseers or visitors in nature
- Still not reciprocal or healthy



In reaction to this, we have John Muir, one of my heroes, who takes this dichotomy and turns it on its head. For Muir, it was not human changes that were good and valuable in their own right, but things that are natural. Muir was a pantheist and saw in nature the face of God, and saw the works of civilization as a destruction of God's works. This reaction is certainly understandable given the excesses of the time, but it really did not help us learn how to live with the rest of nature. None-the-less, it is from Muir that most of modern environmentalism takes its lead, seeing nature basically innocent and good and the opposite of what humans do. From this we get the motto "take only pictures, leave only footprints." The assumption is that we are only sightseers in nature. Or at least that is the polite way to look at it. To make an analogy in terms of human-to-human relationships, it assumes that we are at best voyeurs, and at worst, murderers.

Both sides of the debate agree ...



I believe that this dichotomy that places humans on one side of a divide, and nature on the other, is at the root of many of our environmental problems. Regardless of which “side” you think is “right,” this dichotomy prohibits any positive interaction with the rest of nature.

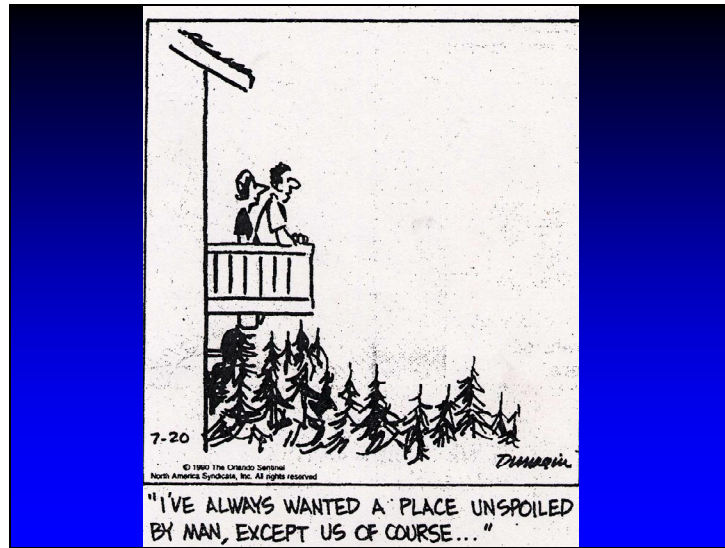
I went through this history to establish that this dichotomy is historically based, not grounded in some universal truth as it may sometimes seem to us.

Slide 15



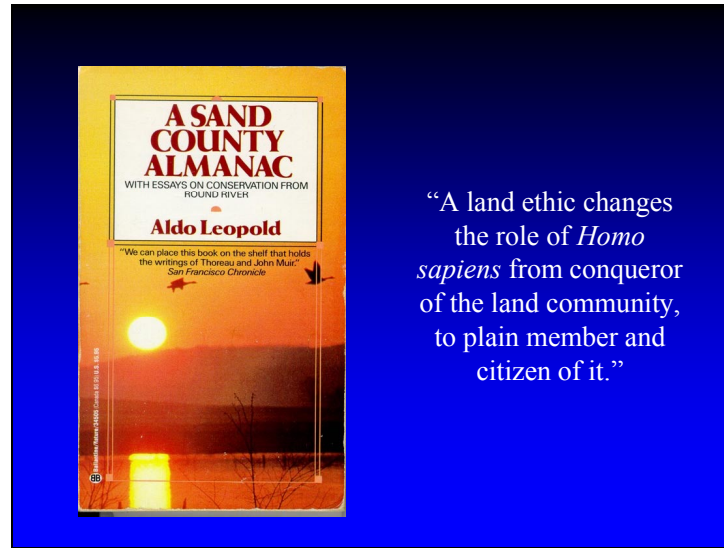
And that debate has lead us to this on the one hand

Slide 16



And this on the other.....

Slide 17



“A land ethic changes
the role of *Homo
sapiens* from conqueror
of the land community,
to plain member and
citizen of it.”

Contrast this with the writings of one of America’s first restoration ecologists, Aldo Leopold, in *A Sand County Almanac*. While writing this seminal work in environmental philosophy, Leopold was also working on one of the first prairie restoration projects in the country at the University of Wisconsin, Madison Arboretum. It was restoration, I believe, that drove home the concept for him that humans could have a positive role to play as *part* of nature. He wrote, “A land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community, to plain member and citizen of it.” This concept of humans being a part of nature allows us to overcome the dichotomy that has served to separate us from the rest of nature and prohibited responsible interaction with the rest of our “land community.”

Another Gratuitous Fire Slide



I don't think it was a coincidence that Leopold was thinking the way he was and leading the nation's early efforts at restoration. I suggest that ecological restoration might be more than merely a technology. I believe it sets up an entirely new relationship with the land. In the process of repairing damage and reestablishing processes, we physically, intellectually, and emotionally become a part of the ecological system. This is something that came as a surprise to many restorationists. Originally we thought that we could just repair the past damage, get the ball rolling again, and then sever our ties and let the restored system go on without us. What we have found, however, is that our ongoing involvement is necessary to ensure that the continued health of the system. Originally this was taken as a failure for restoration, but I have come to look at it as a success.



If we look at restoration as a way to forge relationships with and constructively participate in a larger ecological community, then the last thing that we would want to do is sever those ties. There are, after all, more similarities between life forms on this planet than obvious differences. We are not separate from nature, but are a part of nature; we are active participants in the planet's processes and its restoration. In this light, the restorative process and our roles in it *is natural*. The restorationist really is just a member and citizen of a larger ecological community, just one part of the healing process, working within the ground rules of the other components of the system.



The only reason to believe that ongoing human involvement in the restoration process is a failure of restoration, as I initially did, is if we believe that humans are not natural and that the goal of restoration is to remake a nature that has nothing to do with humans. I reiterate: this is the standard assumption of American environmentalism. There are many who support this position. They argue that if we make nature into just another artifact controlled by humans (which is what they see restoration as) then we have lost everything that we value about wild nature. But I suggest that they do not fully understand the restorationist's involvement in the healing process. We *are* involved, but we *are not* in control: You can spread the seed, but if the rains don't come, the seed won't grow; if there is too much rain, then runoff carries your seeds downhill onto your neighbor's property.


Restored systems have many values



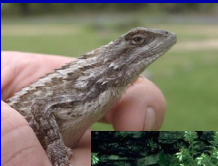
Although an unrestored system, such as a relic prairie system, does indeed have qualities that a restored system lacks, this does not mean that restored systems are without value. In fact, these systems may possess values that a relic system lacks. For one thing, the restored system may teach how valuable the relic system is. It teaches about the rest of the local participants in the prairie are.

Beyond the Promise


What restoration actually delivers



Someday, perhaps
true restoration



In the mean time, a chance
to learn about who the rest
of the ecological community
is, and how we can
positively fit in.



Onosmodium helleri (Heller's marblesseed)

In this way, ecological restoration offers a model for positive interaction with the rest of nature. Hopefully, if our technology improves, it could one day offer a way to truly restore what has gone before. Today, that is a feat to which we can only aspire. More importantly, however, restoration offers a way to learn who (or what) the other citizens in the land community are along with the role that they play.

**Leaving much
more than
footprints**

- A legacy
- A relationship
- Avoiding the fallacy of benign neglect



Restoration allows for an understanding that we are not the sole determinates of the course for the rest of nature, thereby teaching us humility. It also allows for something else: a recognition that it is not wrong for us to act and interact with the rest of the community, *per se*. It keeps us from making the mistake of writing off those areas we have touched as destroyed and ignoring the effects of benign neglect on those areas we believe to be wilderness.

Slide 24

